

**Equity Committee Meeting
Eugene Public Schools District 4J
200 N. Monroe**

February 14th, 2019
4:36 pm

PRESENT: Gary Campbell, Laura Dahill, Nicholas Kaasa, Ann Elizabeth Cole, David Abramowitz, Thomas Anil Oommen, members; Gustavo Balderas, Karen Pérez, Andy Dey, Charis McGaughy, Oscar Loureiro, staff.

I. Welcome and Introductions

Ms. Pérez calls the meeting to order at 4:32 p.m.

She then announces that the topic of this meeting is graduation rates, and that the meeting will begin with introductions that includes each person present answering the question of "What lens and/ or experience do you bring with you today to this conversation on graduation rates?"

Each individual present introduces themselves and offers their unique lens on graduation rates.

II. Review and Approval of Minutes

Ms. Pérez then continues to the review and approval of minutes once the introductions have finished. The minutes from two meetings prior in December have been edited and are up for approval.

Andy Dey moves to pass the December minutes. David Abramowitz seconds. Ms. Pérez then passes the December minutes.

The January minutes are then up for approval. Ann Elizabeth Cole moves to pass the January minutes, Nicholas Kaasa seconds, Ms. Pérez passes the January minutes.

III. Equity Lens Protocol

The meeting is then moved to the Equity Lens Protocol, the VISION 20/20 Goal is Educational Excellence and Equitable Access and Outcomes for Every Student; Key Indicator- Graduation Rates.

Oscar Loureiro then presents data on Trends in 4-Year Graduation Rates and 4J's Disaggregated 4- Year Graduation rates, each respective data set accompanied by an in-depth hand out of graduation data by group. Last school year's were released on 1/24/2019, and included regular and modified diplomas, extended diplomas, and GED's. He highlights that most 4J student groups improved their 4- year graduation rates from 2014 to 2018, although

graduation gaps in certain groups still persisted, Looking at *Trends in 4 Year Graduation Gaps in 4J*, he credits some successes in some groups, but calls attention to some persisting gaps. The graduation gap by family income remained stable over 5 years, while the gap for Latino students shrank by 6 points and the gender gap grew by 5 points. He then continues to *Disaggregated 4 Year Graduation Rates*, and points out that most groups in this data set improved graduation rates, whereas some dropped, English Language Learners (anytime in High School), being the most drastic, by 18.9%, followed by African American students, who dropped 15.5%.

Ms. McGaughy makes a clarifying comment, saying that some minority groups observed here are very small in proportion to other groups, so only a few individuals can have a significant impact on percentages. She then notes that the Gender Gap in graduation rates, males vs. females, is the largest observable trend in graduation rates and is also the largest growing gap, doubling over the last year.

Mr. Loureiro then points out some positive news, that the Latino student gap shrank by 6 points. He then observed the graduation rates of 4J as compared to the rest of Oregon. 4J started as more than 10 points higher than the state average in 2009, and now 4J is below the state average by 4.3 points. 4J is 8th out of the 15 districts, and number 9 when comparing outside of Lane County. 4J is also 4th for graduation growth in one year however, and looking at overall completion rates 4J is much closer to the state average. He lastly points out that the 4J dropout rate went up, and they are higher than others in the state.

Andy Dey then gives an overview of what actions high schools are taking to improve graduation rates. Some measures across the district are identical, and some are unique to the structural needs of each school. Across the district, making sure first year students are earning 6 credits before their second year of high school is being implemented. He notes here that this is critical, if a student enters their second year on track to graduate their graduation rate is projected to be no less than 90%. At Churchill, they are looking at intervening throughout the term at critical points if a student is not on track instead of waiting until the end of the term, and emphasizing efforts on a team and individual level to address student needs. He also addresses the importance of trauma informed care; how to assist students with a significant amount of trauma in their personal lives. ECCO gives students who struggled in their first year of high school the option to earn upper level credits to demonstrate proficiency; as well as Credit by Proficiency programs for earning a GED. Extended programs consisting of 3 credits instead of 5 a term are also an option to help students succeed. North Eugene High School is looking at when to intervene efficiently, including seniors before their school year starts to make sure they are on track to graduate. Correspondence with families is also to be updated every 2 to 3 weeks to ensure good communication. He also mentions how important forming appropriate and supportive relationships with students is, as Sheldon's motto is "We Believe in You." Staff made it a point to meet with every single student to address individual needs. In addition, every time a class is missed there is a call home.

Superintendent Balderas then adds that there is work being done to make sure all schools across the district are becoming more data informed by training on data teams, as well as implementing relevant courses to help kids want to come to school. Additional counselors are being added to schools as well as transition coordinators. Summer school for all grades is being worked on, as well. Credit recovery programs are also looked at.

Mr. Dey continues by saying that one of the problems with programs like Early College Opportunities is the fact that students have to leave their schools, and a solution is looking at eliminating traumatic transitions and providing credit recovery in house at schools. He also announces the idea of an online program as well to help students earn credits at home in addition to school. This is one of the first of its kind within the district.

Ms. Pérez then moves the meeting to clarifying questions for those who wish to bring questions into the discussion.

David Abramowitz asks what the effect of a district wide program for graduation has on students in a specific school.

Mr. Loureiro answers by saying that it can raise to graduation rate as a whole for students in a specific school.

Mr. Abramowitz wonders if some buildings are less receptive to special programs.

Mr. Dey says he has never had an issue with schools rejecting implementing special programs.

Mr. Abramowitz then raises the question that if there are concerns about college or graduation readiness in high schools, then are there any in middle school checking high school readiness, and are they effective?

Mr. Dey answers that there are, for example there are interventions in certain courses set up to address student readiness for high school, as well as programs to help students with organizational skills necessary for academic success. These programs are looking to be implemented in elementary schools as well.

Ms. Pérez also says there are transition programs as well, like the Summer Bridge program that helps students get acclimated with staff before high school.

Laura Dahill asks if transition coordinators are a part of this program.

Mr. Dey says that there are also transition coordinators in place to help the jarring transition into high school making the transition cohesive between students staff and families starting in 8th grade.

Superintendent Balderas outlines the importance of having laser like focus on every kid during this transition to ensure that issues are being caught and addressed effectively and appropriately.

Mr. Dey brings forth the need for staff that aren't confined in one place during class periods that can effectively seek out students who aren't where they are supposed to be and deal with that effectively and acts as a distribution hub for information is a valuable investment.

Ms. McGaughy comments that consistency in these implementations is crucial so that no student falls through the cracks. She recognizes that the data shows that these are significant problems in high schools in 4J, but decentralization has acted as a roadblock. Infrastructure is a significant solution to these issues. This will help recognize student issues early before they are a few years behind.

Gary Campbell asks if there is a systemic approach to the transition from 8th grade to high school while the students are in 8th grade and if every student is given access to these resources.

Mr. Dey says that counselors are deployed to schools to help with transition and some kids going to different high schools may hinder effectiveness, as well as forecasting resources being available to all students. He continues by stating that focus was given to students who showed that their performance was problematic, but anticipating that every student will have some struggle with the transition and opening up these resources has had good turnout and is anticipated to grow.

Mr. Campbell asks why it is not currently an expectation that all students attend these transition programs.

Mr. Dey answers with the problem is not with expectation, but with enforcement, which they currently cannot enforce attendance but anticipates participation to increase.

Mr. Campbell then mentions AVID, the middle school program for intervention and asks if there is data on its success rates.

Mr. Dey presents the information that rigorous high school courses are shown to help students succeed after high school, and that maximization of students in these courses is optimal. Instead of looking at who is a good fit for AP classes, widen the scope and look for students who are interested and address barriers they may have to be in them in high school. He then goes on to announce that the minimum GPA for success in AP classes is 1.7, meaning more students could be more successful in these classes. He then addresses that the language around these classes can create barriers to intimidate students away from taking them.

Ms. Pérez then moves the meeting to open dialogue.

Thomas Anil Oommen speaks first, and addresses his curiosity about the dip in graduation rates in 2013 and the subsequent rise the next year, and how they district addressed that in the past and how they climbed out.

Ms. Cole then wonders about what elements are affecting the boys specifically in the gender gap in graduation rates.

Ms. Dahill follows with how one of the high schools focused in individual relationships with every student, and how that is extremely important and critical.

Mr. Abramowitz speaks on his concerns with disability and graduation rates and how there needs to be an improvement in addressing disability in these statistics as well.

Mr. Campbell highlights the importance of data and student surveys, and how getting student feedback helps to put their lens on these issues as well. He also wonders about counselor to student ratios and what can be done to improve them. He also wonders about CTE and transition coordinator investments and funds.

Ms. Cole agrees with students having a voice and how important this feedback can be to address these issues.

Mr. Abramowitz recalls a survey sent home to families implemented in his experience and how helpful it was to see what students and families liked and disliked.

U of O students sitting in on the meeting then offered their views on the issues raised. They liked the efforts to reach out to families, and individual relationships with students. There was also an affinity for the programs in place to identify kids who are falling behind.

Mr. Oommen appreciated the statistics about grade point averages and success in AP classes.

Mr. Abramowitz wonders how scheduling can be modified to help students who are behind earn credits faster.

Ms. Pérez agrees, and says there have been options added to help students get ahead in core classes like math and how that has been effective.

Ms. Cole expresses her excitement about personalized education.

Superintendent Balderas summarizes some of the key points of the meeting, and the importance to keep reaching out to students and families to see what is working well and what is not working well.

Ms. McGaughy then summarizes her notes on the main points of the meeting and the ground that has been covered as well.

Mr. Dey concludes with bringing up 5th year students and their impact on graduation rates, and identifying barriers that are not seen as barriers as of now. He believes that 4J has improved over the last 5 to 10 years, but there is more work to be done. He then highlights the importance of college and career readiness that cannot be surmounted in curriculum. He addresses the need to address problems with graduation rates in the disabilities program as brought up by Mr. Abramowitz.

Ms. McGaughy then adds that removing the expectation that every student graduates with a regular diploma that more students will be pushed into these exceptions.

Mr. Abramowitz agrees that the bar should stay high but sees issues with reallocation of resources away from other things that are important.

Superintendent Balderas resonates the importance of bringing back core classes that are relevant to life skills.

Charis builds on the comment of what happened with the low graduation rates in 2013, and talks about the recession and how that raised class sizes and courses being cut because of the tight budget. She highlights the importance of bringing back personalized education.

Ms. Pérez raises the issue that a lot of these groups with graduation gaps are also experiencing bullying and microaggressions, and the implementation of anti-bias trainings for staff to help counter this.

IV. Superintendent Updates

Superintendent Balderas closes up by expressing his appreciation for all of the feedback and what is being brought to the table, as well as recognizing there is a long road to come. He also comments that they are in the middle of the budget process at the moment, and whatever can be added needs to be concerned with equity, and how problems need to be caught earlier instead of after they have already happened.

Ms. Pérez gives updates about the Community Equity Forum on diversity that happened, and announced upcoming events concerned with Equity, with a film being shown done by Disorient on March 20th and then an event on March 2nd for people of color to come and eat a meal and have an open conversation. There are also professional development days coming up that are concerned with diversity and anti-bias.

Ms. Pérez then closes the meeting at 6:32.